Workman speaks with additional authority, and poignancy, as he approaches the end of his career. He implies that he speaks out only because that end is near; to allow it to arrive without speaking out would amount to maintaining silence forever -- `a sin of omission, deserving of enduring self-condemnation' (1866, 8). Moreover it might be many years before any successor would enjoy a similar opportunity in terms of forum and audience; worse, that successor might prove too modest or lazy to take advantage.

He therefore finds himself at a decisive moment, but so should other members of society, especially doctors, teachers, and religious officials. Everyone who knows anything about `the habit' and does not speak `should be regarded as criminal' -- and many people know a great deal: `They will know that all I have written on the subject not only is true, but that it falls very far short of the whole truth' (1866, 9). It really is rather incriminating that, in his almost exactly contemporary `Observations on insanity,'[xix] Workman is considerably more cautious about masturbation and even ridicules it as a major cause of insanity: `if masturbation be regarded per se, as an efficient cause, I dread to think how multitudinous will be the number of lunatics in America' (406).

Workman subsequently endeavours to combine masturbation with consumption, the one moral and largely imaginary, the other more poetic yet physiologically based. Paresis and consumption are already connected as gender-specific causes of death, or what Workman rather ingeniously labels `compensative death factors' (1871, 24), paresis as male consumption and consumption as female paresis. All of the males who die of consumption are identified as masturbators, or somewhat less than men, `inveterately addicted to the secret evil habit' (24). Consequently consumption in men appears doubly unmanly, as a disease more closely associated with women and masturbators.[xx] His masturbators appear in the sort of language Shelley addressed to himself, as they `welt, and wither, and perish, even as the tender plant, gnawed and poisoned at the core by a hidden destroyer' (24). He concludes a scarifying depiction of `hundreds and thousands ... continuously crawling on in the hideous march of Death' (24), by exhorting `all men' that `this pestilence might be checked' (24). Perhaps it is irrelevant to wonder which pestilence he means (masturbation? consumption? masturbation and consumption? death? something else -- effeteness? effeminacy? homosexuality?),[xxi] since it appears that he might not mean anything at all.